

School-Based Mental Health Services for Children in Early Education

Summary of June 30, 2017 Subcommittee Workgroup Meeting

The goals of the School-Based Mental Health Services for Children in Early Education project (a.k.a. the Schools and Mental Health Project) are to ensure that the mental health needs of children ages 3 to 8 years old are identified early and treated with evidence-based therapies to enhance short- and long-term academic, behavioral, and socio-emotional functioning outcomes. The premise behind the project's goals is that untreated mental health needs in children negatively impacts learning and leads to life-long problems. This project attempts to circumvent this trajectory by:

1. Encouraging innovation in meeting children's mental health needs.
2. Building greater collaboration between education and community mental health partners to ensure timely, high quality, and integrated services.
3. Breaking the "fail first" paradigm in schools and promoting the earliest possible interventions in preschool and early elementary school.
4. Developing stronger partnerships with parents and caregivers of children with mental health needs.

The MHSOAC Subcommittee for the project is Sacramento County Superintendent of Schools and Commissioner David Gordon (chair), Commissioner Richard Van Horn, and Commissioner Gladys Mitchell.

The project officially began on December 6, 2016 with a site visit to a local Sacramento elementary school, followed by the convening of the first Subcommittee Workgroup Meeting that was held at the Greater Sacramento Urban League. This first project meeting primarily focused on the individual/system/community-level barriers that prevent children and families from receiving timely, high quality mental health services and supports. This meeting, as well as a subsequent MHSOAC public hearing on January 26, 2017, paved the way for considering how to improve service delivery through a multi-tiered framework built on cross-agency partnerships and collaborations.

The second Subcommittee Workgroup Meeting of the Schools and Mental Health Project was held on June 30, 2017 at the Rustin Conference Center on the campus of the Riverside University Health System – Behavioral Health (UHS-BH; formerly known as Riverside County Department of Mental Health) in Riverside, CA. The location was chosen to maximize stakeholder attendance and input from across the State, as well as to highlight school-county partnerships in Southern California. Over 100 individuals attended the meeting, representing a diverse array of persons from school districts, community agencies, and organizations (see list below). The primary purpose of the meeting was: 1) To feature cross-agency collaborations, specifically between early childhood, school, and county/community mental health providers in Southern California who provide services to children and families; and 2) To present and discuss a proposed MHSOAC-funded pilot study to be implemented in pre and elementary schools using a multi-tiered and interconnected systems framework for providing mental health prevention and early intervention services and supports to young children and their families.

The meeting featured presentations by experts from the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) National and California Centers and Seneca Family of Agencies, each of whose work provided a framework for the pilot study (see list of presenters below). The pilot study protocol that was available for review by those who had registered for the meeting was presented by Dr. Fred Molitor, the MHSOAC Director of Research and Evaluation. If supported by the full Commission the study would be implemented in 15 California schools in that have implemented PBIS Tier I Services (universal – schoolwide) and have a documented specific level of fidelity to the model. Dr. Molitor noted in his presentation that at any given time over 500 elementary schools in California are at this stage of PBIS implementation. The primary intervention activities of the study would involve providing training,

coaching, and technical assistance to schools and districts to build and sustain Integrated Intervention Teams of school and community partners to provide services and supports to children at risk and/or in need of services (Tier II and III of PBIS). Other unique aspects of the study involve examining the community factors that facilitate or impede student and school outcomes, as well as conducting a rigorous cost-benefit analysis of the intervention.

The afternoon meeting activities featured Riverside UHS-BH, who discussed their efforts at building partnerships across schools and community agencies, and the key elements of those partnerships that counter the barriers and challenges that naturally arise when systems are not integrated. Presentations from the First 5 Coalitions of Alameda, Riverside, and Orange County also highlighted the power of partnerships with a focus on early education programs to increase early identification of behavioral problems and reduce preschool suspension and expulsions.

List of Presenters

- Susan Barrett, M.A., PBIS National TA Center
- Diana Brown, M.S., LMFT, PEI Administrative Services Manager, Riverside University Health System – Behavioral Health
- Adria Galarza, M.S., SET-4-School Coordinator, Lake Elsinore Unified School District
- Tammi Graham, Executive Director, First 5 Riverside
- Emily Higgs, MSW, Policy Analyst, Seneca Family of Agencies
- Cristina Jennings, B.A., Parent Education Coordinator, The Carolyn E. Wylie Center
- Melinda Konoske, M.S., Consultant, The Children and Families Commission of Orange County
- Michael Lombardo, M.A. Executive Director, Prevention Services & Supports/PBIS Project Director, Placer County Office of Education
- Fred Molitor, Ph.D., MHSOAC Director of Research and Evaluation
- Malia Ramler, MSW, MPH, Senior Administrator, First 5 Alameda County
- Keri Montesino Stewart, Ph.D., Unconditional Education Coach, Seneca Family of Agencies

Lastly, the final hour of the meeting was devoted to public comment. The feedback received from stakeholders in the audience was highly favorable of the MHSOAC proposed pilot study and efforts to bring school and community partners together to improve mental health services and supports for children and their families. Suggestions by stakeholders to enhance the proposed pilot study included:

- Specify efforts to reduce disparities in access to targeted and intensive services.
- Engage diverse communities in efforts to build cultural competency across systems.
- Partner with local community programs and cultural brokers in the community in efforts to engage families.
- Use the opportunity to partner with communities as part of a broader effort to reduce stigma.
- Clearly articulate how supports and services will be trauma-informed.
- Include schools in the pilot that represent populations with different health care coverage (i.e., predominantly Medicaid eligible, predominantly private insurance).
- Streamline processes for data sharing and creating memorandums of understanding (MOUs).
- Address how the preschool structure is unique from elementary school, as well as the developmental needs of preschool children and their families.

Next Steps

The MHSOAC proposed pilot study will be revised based on the feedback received from the June 30 meeting attendees and stakeholders and will be presented to the MHSOAC Commissioners for review and approval at July 27 Commission Meeting in Sacramento. In addition, a Project Advisory Committee will be established to have a formalized process in place for receiving relevant, ongoing and meaningful advice from stakeholders, policy makers, and statewide leaders in education and mental health. The Advisory Committee will provide advice to the Schools and Mental Health Subcommittee and Project staff, specifically related to the pilot study and developing policy recommendations to present to the MHSOAC Commissioners at the end of the project.

Acknowledgements

The MHSOAC acknowledges our County partners at Riverside UHS-BH who hosted the June 30 meeting at the Rustin Conference Center. We specifically thank Bill Brenneman, Sharon Lee, and Diana Brown (Riverside UHS-BH) for their extraordinary efforts in making this meeting possible.

Representatives from the Following Organizations Attended the June 30, 2017 Subcommittee Workgroup Meeting:

1. Breaking Barriers
2. California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT)
3. California Association of School Counselors (CASC)
4. California Association of School Psychologists (CASP)
5. California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies (CCCBHA)
6. California Department of Public Health – Office of Health Equity (CDPH-OHE)
7. California Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (CalTAC PBIS)
8. Child and Family Guidance Center (CFGC)
9. Child Care Resource Center (CCRC)
10. Children's Hospital of Orange County (CHOC)
11. Community Now
12. Desert Mountain Special Education Local Plan Areas (DM SELPA)
13. Feel Free to Feel Free (FF2FF): Health and Wellness Program
14. First 5 California and partnering coalitions from Alameda, Orange, and Riverside Counties
15. Fresno County Superintendent of Schools
16. Fontana Unified School District
17. Garden Grove Unified School District/Project Cal-Well
18. Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services
19. Hemet Unified School District
20. Irvine Unified School District
21. Jurupa Unified School District
22. Lake Elsinore Unified School District- SET – 4 – School
23. Los Angeles County Office of Education – Division of Student Support Services
24. Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LAC DMH)
25. Mental Health Advocacy Services
26. Murrieta Valley Unified School District
27. National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Pomona Valley

28. Orange County Department of Education
29. Orange County Health Care Agency
30. Placer County Health and Human Services
31. Redondo Beach Unified School District
32. Riverside County Department of Mental Health – Parent Support and Training Program
33. Riverside Unified School District
34. Riverside University Health System – Behavioral Health
35. San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health – Children and Youth Collaborative Services (CYCS)
36. San Jacinto Unified School District
37. San Mateo County Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA)
38. Seneca Family of Agencies
39. The Carolyn E. Wylie Center for Children, Youth, & Families
40. Uplift Family Services
41. Ventura County Health Care Agency – Behavioral Health
42. Wellness Together